



BLM-ALASKA FRONTIERS

Issue 61 May/June 1997

Dancers from Alaska, the Lower 48, Brazil and other parts of the world met in Bethel in March to celebrate Native dance traditions at the Camai Dance Festival. Because the event is so popular with Alaska Natives, Bureau of Land Management employees were there to address questions or concerns about its Native allotment program.

The Native allotment program is a priority with BLM-Alaska since thousands of allotment applications must be processed, surveyed and conveyed before final land selections by the State and Native corporations can be made. BLM has undergone a massive adjudication and transfer of public land to the State and Natives following the Alaska Statehood Act and the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act of 1971 (ANCSA). The Statehood Act entitles the State to 104.5 million acres while ANCSA allows the Native corporations 44 million acres.

ANCSA repealed the 1906 Native Allotment Act, which authorized qualified Alaska Natives up to 160 acres of public land, but BLM is still processing thousands of applications filed before the act was repealed.

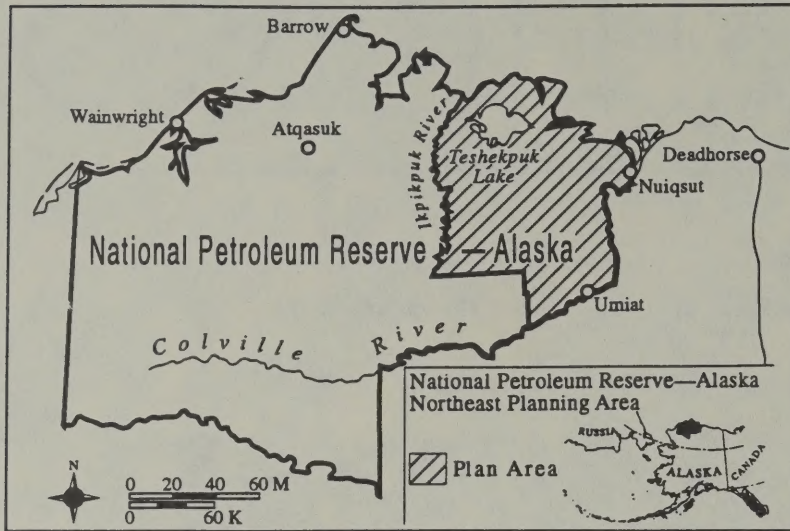
Sharing information and tradition at the Camai Dance Festival



Danielle Allen

The Camai Dance Festival held in Bethel in March entertained spectators with drum ceremonies, traditional dances, potlatches and more. BLM employees were there to answer questions about Native allotments and other BLM programs.

BLM launches Herculean task in NPR-A



scoping (skop' ing) — v.t. *Slang* 8. to look at, read or investigate, as in order to evaluate or appreciate. (Random House Dictionary, 1986)

In March and April, the Bureau of Land Management held public scoping meetings in Anchorage and Fairbanks, and in the North Slope villages of Barrow, Atkasuk and Nuiqsut. The staff listened to comments from over 150 people concerned with the Northeast Planning Area of the National Petroleum Reserve in Alaska. Back at the office another 100 comments were received by mail and through the NPR-A Internet home page.

The interagency team of representatives from BLM, the Minerals Management Service, the North Slope Borough and the state of Alaska has been sifting through the comments, defining current and potential problems, and debating alternate ways to manage the northeast corner of the petroleum reserve. The planning team will consider additional research, input from scientists who have worked on Arctic projects, and a list of desired oil and gas leasing areas submitted by industry before issuing a draft Integrated Activity Plan and Environmental Impact Statement (IAP/EIS) for the planning area by August 1997.

The scoping phase of the planning process was critical for identifying issues and concerns people have about management of public lands. Each concern will be scoped — looked at, investigated, examined and evaluated—and the team will discuss ways to allow activities on planning area lands

without damaging other resource values.

The official public scoping period ended April 18, 1997, but the BLM wants people to continue to tell the staff about their concerns. "We don't want any issue falling through a crack in this process," says State Director Tom Allen. "We need everyone's thoughts to ensure this plan reflects their concerns."

Comments were received from village, city, borough, state and federal agencies; environmental groups, petroleum and mining interests, Native and tribal entities, and the general public. The level of detail ranged from expressing general concerns to making specific recommendations and providing detailed scientific data, references and traditional knowledge.

The most consistent concern expressed at all public meetings and in nearly all of the written comments was the fear that the 18-month planning process would not give the BLM adequate time to receive meaningful public and agency information, and to compile recent research findings and traditional knowledge.

Other concerns and recommendations were:

Data

- BLM should include a comprehensive, cumulative impact assessment of all past, present and proposed oil and gas development and other land use activities on the North Slope in the EIS.
- Available data is not adequate to thoroughly assess potential impacts on natural and cultural resources or to develop effective mitigation measures to protect resource values.

Impacts

- The BLM should apply stipulations and mitigative measures as a way of minimizing impacts.
- The BLM should adjust special area boundaries to include other resources or unique areas such as the Pik sand dunes or subsistence camps.
- Congress should legislatively designate special areas as national conservation system units.
- Special areas should be closed to oil and gas development.
- Recreational values and off-road scenic and

wilderness qualities of NPR-A should be protected, either by legislative designation of a national conservation system unit, or by not offering the affected area for oil and gas leasing. For example, the Colville River was identified for its remote river-floating opportunities.

- The most critical management issue for North Slope communities is subsistence. While these communities benefit from oil and gas development and are interested in further development, the Inupiaq people rely on access to traditional areas and use of resources to preserve their cultural heritage and provide their livelihood. While most North Slope commenters support full protection of these resources, they oppose legislative designations that increase restrictions on subsistence uses and access.

Subsistence

- Exploration and development activities should minimize displacement of fish and wildlife.
- Development should also allow subsistence hunters to move about freely to reach their traditional use areas.
- A "subsistence review panel" consisting of local residents should be established. This panel would work directly with the BLM and the oil industry to review land use proposals and to resolve conflicts that arise between subsistence activities and oil exploration and development activities.

Trespass problems

- The certification process should be completed on pending Native allotments before any leasing occurs.
- Land status maps should be updated and industry educated about the location of private lands within NPR-A.
- The Kuukpik Corporation in Nuiqsut must select the rest of its ANCSA entitlement from the area around the village. The people oppose leasing on land that may eventually belong to the village corporation.

Environmental quality

- Air quality on the North Slope has diminished.

- Respiratory problems are perceived to be a result of North Slope oil production operations, especially in winter around Nuiqsut.
- Known contamination sites need to be cleaned up.
- Oil spill prevention and response plans must adequately address potential problems and minimize impacts on water quality and fish habitat.

Oil and gas leasing and development

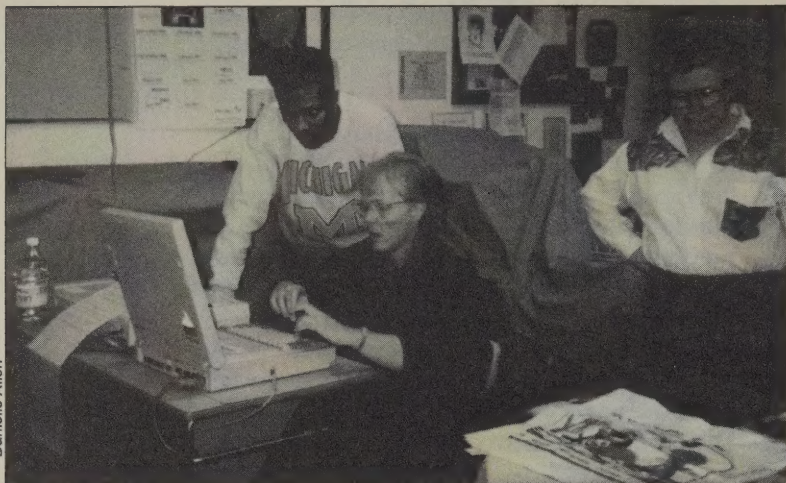
- Previously reported comments by Secretary of Interior Bruce Babbitt indicate a biased, predetermined outcome, contrary to the intent of the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969.
- The nation lacks a national energy policy.
- There is no demonstrated need for producing additional oil and gas resources, given current low prices and the ability to export domestic oil.
- The NPR-A is a "rainy day" reserve account and should be saved.
- Critical wildlife habitat, subsistence use areas and scenic areas shouldn't be traded for short-term economic gains.
- The BLM should apply stipulations and mitigative measures as a way of minimizing impacts.
- Oil and gas development does not preclude protection of surface resource values.
- Modern operations impact the environment far less than in the past, due to improved technology and stiffer stipulations.
- The BLM's leasing program could be more efficient by:
 - changing the maximum leasing tract size to 5,760 acres,
 - having minimum bids of less than \$25 per acre,
 - unifying leases,
 - holding timely lease sales, and
 - allowing extension of lease terms when the company is waiting for the development of transportation facilities.
- NPR-A should be open to exploration and development of hard rock mineral resources.

Commenters frequently expressed their appreciation for the opportunity to comment on the planning effort. BLM officials and the planning team look forward to more discussions on future management of the Northeast Planning Area of the NPR-A.

—Sharon Durgan Wilson

For more information on the NPR-A, visit the BLM Internet Home Page at :
<http://www.ndo.ak.blm.gov/npra/>

Native allotments are a big hit at Camai Dance Festival



Danielle Allen

Jane Miller, land law examiner, and electronic mechanic John Miller, bring a computer on line so visitors can get the most current information on Native allotments. Land law examiner Eve Heavener (right) scans BLM literature to be distributed at the festival.

When the Alaska Airlines jet set down in Bethel on a cold March afternoon, four Bureau of Land Management employees got off the plane to clear skies and a frigid wind.

The group's lead, Jane Miller, a BLM land law examiner, was taking everything in stride. The missing luggage was halfway expected; so was getting lost while driving around the town. "Everything takes time when you come to the village," said Miller.

This trip was different for Miller. She normally works the Alaska Bush alone, flying into remote areas with a pilot, talking to allottees, looking over the land. But for three days, she was joined by her colleagues at the Camai Dance Festival where they talked to people about the BLM and its Native allotment program.

The Native allotment program is pivotal to BLM's land transfer program. BLM has undergone a massive adjudication and land transfer of public land to the State and Natives following the Alaska Statehood and Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act (ANCSA). The Statehood Act entitles the State to 104.5 million acres while ANCSA allows the Native corporations 44 million acres. ANCSA repealed the 1906 Native Allotment Act, which authorized qualified Alaska Natives up to 160 acres of public land, but BLM is still processing thousands of

applications filed before the act was repealed. These allotment applications must be processed, surveyed and conveyed before final land selections by the State and Native corporations can be made. BLM State Director Tom Allen says he'd like the Native allotment program sunsetted in seven years.

With this in mind, Miller had long thought the festival would be a perfect way to reach a larger number of Natives with questions about their allotments. She also knew the festival drew many Natives from the Bethel area. But BLM management wasn't sure. "The trip was on and off several times," says Miller, who began working on it a year ago. "There was concern that the festival wasn't the proper venue to reach our allottees." But the potential of reaching so many people at one time proved too attractive. "Besides," says Miller, "trying to coordinate with people between fishing and hunting seasons is always difficult."

Set up in a vacant classroom at the high school, the specialists answered questions, located allotments on maps, and distributed brochures and other literature on BLM programs. An uncooperative computer wasn't a deterrent since backup printed information was available.

Eve Heavner, who works with Jane Miller, says she met people she has corresponded with throughout the years. "Most of the questions I took had to do with the status of an application," says Heavner. Family members and relatives of allottees did their share of inquiring, too.

The BLM's Resource Apprenticeship Program got a pitch from Native liaison specialist Brenda Takes Horse who says, "I see this as a way to get Natives interested in employment in the natural resource fields." RAPS is a statewide, public, nonprofit partnership that involves the government and others by offering learning opportunities to teenagers and young adults in natural resources.

Also sharing the BLM space was Mary Trailov, the manager of the US Department of Agriculture's Bethel Rural Development office. She displayed information about her work and did Yupik translation.

By the end of the three days, the weather was still cold and the wind was still blowing, but Jane Miller was enthusiastic. "It was nice to work and share this outreach experience with other BLMers. I think our visitors were pleased with the information and service we gave them."

—Danielle Allen

A "win-win" for the environment and Native shareholders

Interior Department and Native association exchange refuge land

An agreement between the Department of the Interior (DOI) and a Native corporation leaves the Kenai National Wildlife Refuge richer by more than 3,200 acres and gives the go-ahead to the corporation to pursue plans for economic development. Congress authorized the land exchange under the Kenai Natives Association (KNA) Equity Act amendments of 1996. KNA is an Alaska Native urban corporation based in Kenai, Alaska.

The legislation authorizes amendments to the Kenai Refuge boundary by excluding privately-owned KNA lands. Diana Zirul, president of KNA, says the legislation will allow KNA greater flexibility to use its lands and will provide additional lands, important subsurface interests, and the necessary funding to promote the economic development of KNA resources, while still respecting and preserving their heritage.

Of particular interest is the 803-acre Stephanka Tract along the Kenai River, which Deborah Williams, Alaska aide to Secretary of the Interior Bruce Babbitt, called the "crown jewel" of the Kenai River basin. To protect the important archaeological and cultural values of the Stephanka Tract, the legislation directs the DOI to nominate it to the National Register of Historic Places.

Babbitt signed the agreement to remove 15,000 acres of refuge land that had been conveyed to the Kenai Native Association (KNA) by the Alaska Natives Claims Settlement Act of 1971 (ANCSA). KNA will retain a significant land base within the refuge. To provide KNA with additional opportunities for economic development, the agreement eliminates development restrictions on the remaining 20,000 acres. KNA acquires important subsurface rights, with the exception of coal, oil and gas rights. A five-acre refuge headquarters site from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service in old town Kenai will also be conveyed to the association.

In return, under the legislation the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service will acquire 3,254 acres of land on the Kenai and Moose rivers, formerly owned by KNA, to be included in the Refuge. The majority of the \$4.4 million land sale will be paid with money from the Exxon Valdez Oil Spill Settlement Fund.

"This agreement will protect fish and wildlife habitat on the Kenai River, and provide Alaska Natives with significant new opportunities for economic development on the Kenai Peninsula," says Babbitt.

"This is a win-win for the environment and for KNA shareholders," says Williams. "KNA will get to develop its property with the \$4.4 million seed money and the federal government will get clear title to important land inside the refuge."

Under the 1996 legislation a 37,000-acre special management area will be created surrounding and including Lake Todatonten, a large shallow lake in Interior Alaska northwest of Fairbanks. The rich lake and its surroundings is home to a variety of waterfowl and wildlife and is public land administered by the BLM. It's management will emphasize fish and wildlife conservation while accommodating subsistence hunting and fishing by local residents.

The agreement establishes an 11-member council composed of individuals from the nearby villages of Alatna, Allakaket, Hughes and Tanana, as well as representatives from the Tanana Chiefs Conference, the Doyon Corporation and the state of Alaska. The council will advise the BLM in the use and management of this special area.

—Janet Malone

"This is a win-win for the environment and for KNA shareholders. KNA will get to develop its property ... and the federal government will get clear title to important land inside the refuge."

—Deborah Williams, Alaska aide to Secretary of the Interior
Bruce Babbitt.

Smaller, faster, more efficient — and it's cheaper, too?

The massive Prime 6650 computer system which housed BLM-Alaska's Land Information System (LIS) for the past five years has been replaced by a tiny, powerful unit, the multi-user processor (MUP) which is an IBM RS/6000.

The MUP provides software, data and software licenses for the UNIX workstations used in BLM-Alaska. The modernization contract that BLM has with Computer Sciences Corporation (CSC) provided the hardware (workstations and MUPs).

The massive LIS database contains records information on land claims, ownership and use; Native allotments; master title plats; mineral records and resource maps. BLM's goal is to effectively use automation to make resource management decisions and provide information to the public. CSC is in the process of writing a comprehensive land records system for the BLM, but the new system may not be available for more than a year.

Not only is the MUP faster and more efficient, it's saving the government a bundle of money. The smaller MUP requires less space, so BLM saves money on leased space. Also, the Prime required a raised floor to safely house electrical cords and other wiring. The General Services Administration, holder of the building lease, charges twice as much for raised floor space as it does for standard floor space.

Jim Braham, computer specialist for BLM-Alaska, says the MUP saves energy costs by using less electricity to run. "We had been using two Prime computers that cost us \$142,000 a year in maintenance. The MUP costs us less than \$40,000 to maintain."

"We got special dispensation from the BLM Denver-Washington Office to get the Oracle software which was the database system we used with the Prime," adds Braham. "The database and software on the Prime was transferred to the MUP."

When asked how many pieces of paper the information would take up, Braham says, "Oh boy, we're probably talking about a stack of papers from here to the moon. BLM-Alaska's LIS uses about five gigabytes of data storage; each gigabyte is one billion characters. On a very full sheet of paper—80 columns by 66 lines—you can put about 5,000 characters. You can do the math. Five billion characters would fit in a set of books about 1 million pages thick."

—Janet Malone

Cadastral employee wins award for help during fire

Last summer, when fire burned thousands of acres at Miller's Reach in the Big Lake area north of Anchorage, people united to fight the flames and offer comfort to each other. BLM-Alaska employee Jerry Pinkerton earned the Employee of the Year Award for community service for his efforts during the fire at Miller's Reach.

Pinkerton is chief of BLM-Alaska's branch of survey preparation and policy interpretation, but it was in his role as Pastor of the Big Lake Baptist Church that he helped hundreds of fire victims and firefighters. At one point, flames in the area surrounding the church were shooting 100-200 feet into the air with columns of white and black smoke rising a thousand feet or more. The fire burned approximately 37,000 acres of land, and destroyed 537 homes and buildings.

Jerry and his wife, Connie, worked at the church for 17 days, 12 to 15 hours a day, coordinating and leading volunteer efforts at the church to help the community as much as possible. They relayed names and other pertinent information to many concerned relatives and friends who were calling frantically for any information available.

They served approximately 3,500 to 4,000 meals ranging from warm meals to sack lunches prepared at the church for fire fighters and evacuees. Jerry took food to the National Guard check points two or three times a day, and also served food and refreshments to stranded motorists while they were waiting in their cars for the highways to be re-opened. Besides preparing and distributing the meals, he opened the church to those who had lost their homes or were cut off from their homes by the fire. Nearly two hundred firefighters rested or slept at the church until the Federal Emergency Management Agency provided more permanent facilities.

Bob Conquergood, BLM's representative on the Awards Committee, says the award is sponsored by the Federal Executive Association. "It recognizes special achievements by federal employees. An impartial panel of non-federal community leaders judges the candidates. Four other candidates were nominated for the award in the same community service category that Jerry won."

—Janet Malone

BLM begins study on proposed power line route

The BLM began work on an environmental impact statement to determine a preferred right-of-way route for a proposed power line between Healy and Fairbanks.

"This is a natural extension of our planning process," says Dick Bouts, the BLM's Northern District associate manager. "If we discover enough public concern in the environmental assessment phase, we take the project to the next higher step, which is an environmental impact statement."

The decision to extend the planning process followed a review of public comments on the BLM's environmental assessment completed in January. Those comments are available for public viewing in the BLM Public Room at 1150 University Avenue in Fairbanks.

The 230 kilovolt power line proposed by Golden Valley Electric Association would provide additional power and greater reliability for electrical service to private residences and commercial businesses in Fairbanks. The BLM estimates that the environmental impact statement will be completed by March 1998. Public meetings will be held this June in the communities of Fairbanks, Nenana, Anderson and Healy.

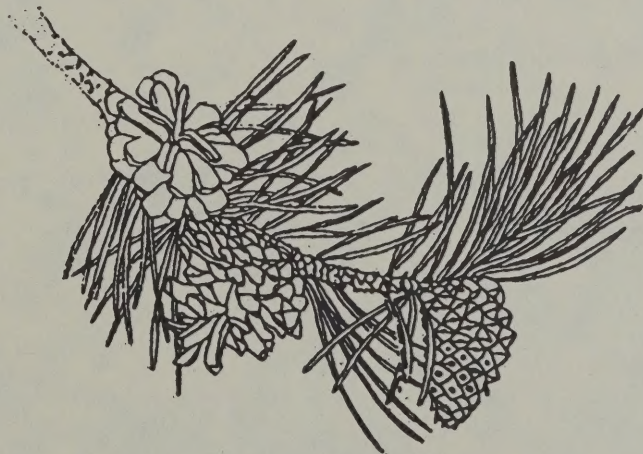
—Sharon Durgan Wilson

BLM awards UNOCAL for improving refuge habitat

The Bureau of Land Management presented Union Oil of California (UNOCAL) its National Health of the Land Award for the company's comprehensive habitat improvement program on the Kenai National Wildlife Refuge.

The company was recognized for making significant contributions in maintaining and improving wildlife habitat, wetlands and ground water. The award commends the company's installation of polyvinyl chloride pipe liners inside metal pipes to avoid leaks, a water filtration and treatment system to collect runoff, and ground water monitoring equipment. UNOCAL also has installed platforms for nesting raptors, and kept drill pads clean of debris and vegetation for moose.

"UNOCAL has become a partner with the BLM and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service in maintaining the health of the refuge lands," said assistant DOI secretary for land and minerals Bob Armstrong, who presented the award to UNOCAL at the National Fluid Minerals Conference in Denver.



Under an agreement by the U.S. Army and the Bureau of Land Management, wildfires on 660,000 acres of military land on Fort Wainwright south of the Tanana area will be monitored but not actively suppressed unless they burn toward areas that are inhabited or contain valuable resources.

The BLM Northern District Office manages natural resources on the land, and the BLM Alaska Fire Service manages wildland fire suppression.

Ruth Gronquist, BLM wildlife biologist, said wildland fires are generally good for wildlife and forests. "Boreal forests like those in Interior Alaska depend on disturbances like fire to rejuvenate them. Wildfire allows new, productive growth, upon which moose, grouse and snowshoe hare thrive. Bears, wolves, lynx and marten benefit from these increased prey populations following fires. Woodpeckers move into the fresh burns to gorge on abundant beetle larvae that infest the dying trees."

The lands are part of the Tanana

flats south of the Tanana River and north of the foothills of the Alaska Range. The area is primarily wetlands, with vegetation consisting of tundra grasses, lowland shrubs and black spruce.

Facilities at Blair Lakes and Native allotments within the boundaries of the military reservation will continue to be protected.

President Clinton has nominated Patrick A. Shea of Utah as the Director of the Bureau of Land Management. Secretary of the Interior Bruce Babbitt praised Clinton's choice of Shea for BLM Director. "Pat Shea's unique blend of legal and management skills coupled with his love of America's outdoors will serve him well in this very challenging position," he said.

Shea, 49, is a prominent Utah lawyer, educator and businessman. Along with practicing law in Salt Lake City and the District of

Columbia, he is an adjunct professor of political science at the Brigham Young University Law School.

Upon confirmation by the Senate, Shea will become the 15th director of the 51-year-old BLM. The BLM Director has policy and administrative responsibility for 270 million acres of surface land and more than 570 million acres of mineral estate.

In another effort to gain public input on oil and gas exploration in the National Petroleum Reserve-Alaska, the Bureau of Land Management and the Minerals Management Service convened a science symposium in Anchorage in April.

As part of the agencies' environmental study effort for the northeast portion of NPR-A, leading scientists and engineers discussed with the public North Slope oil development, the area's wildlife, subsistence uses, archaeology and paleontology issues.

Editor: Janet S. Malone

Text and photos from *BLM—Alaska Frontiers* may be reproduced in whole or in part. Black and white photos may be available on request for republication. Please credit *BLM—Alaska*.

BLM—Alaska Frontiers is located on the internet at: http://www.ak.blm.gov/blm_frontier/frontindex.html

BLM—Alaska Frontiers is printed on recycled paper.

Return if not delivered in 10 days.

OFFICIAL BUSINESS/PENALTY FOR PRIVATE USE \$300

BULK RATE
US POSTAGE PAID
PERMIT No. 125
ANCHORAGE, AK

BLM Library
Denver Federal Center
Bldg. 85, OC-521
P.O. Box 25047
Denver, CO 80225